PRACTICAL HINTS

HEAT BY ELECTRICITY—THE MECHANISM AND OPERATION OF AN ELECTRIC HEATING-PAD.—In hospitals, institutions, and homes supplied with electricity an electric device is fast supplanting the hot-water bag, hot-water bottle, hot cloths, and other means of applying heat locally to the body. This device is in the shape of a pad, varying in size and accordingly in price, the latter ranging from six to thirteen dollars. The purchase price, however, practically covers the entire expense, as the cost of operating is trifling and as, with care, the pad remains in good order for an indefinite period of time. All that is necessary for the operation of the electrical heating-pads is an electrical current with a standard voltage up to 120 and a regulation fixture.

The pad itself consists of a spiral made by yards and yards of infinitely fine wire about a long and very narrow strip of asbestos. This spiral is in turn enveloped in asbestos and, thus isolated, is stitched back and forth to the inside of a muslin bag. The pad, now in shape, goes into a water-proof covering, which protects the wire from perspiration from the patient's body. Then comes a wrapping of lamb's wool, which forms the outside of the pad. The conductor cord is supplied with a plug for connecting, through the lamp-socket, with either a direct or an alternating circuit and with a switch, which is within easy reach of the patient. By means of this switch a patient can easily regulate the current, which can maintain, in the lamb's wool covering, a maximum temperature of 180.

The infinite advantage of these electrical heating-pads over more crude devices for applying heat in such cases as pleurisy, neuralgia, and neurasthenia is evident. One has a soft, light, flexible pad less than three-fourths of an inch thick, which can easily be applied to the site of pain and maintained there indefinitely with little or no inconvenience or disturbance to the patient.

The New York Hospital was one of the first to adapt its electric plant to this use, but this mode of applying heat is now found widely established in hospitals and sanatoria.

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SULPHATE OF MAGNESIA IN VICHY.—Many sick people find sulphate of magnesia (Epsom salts) exceedingly nauseating when given in plain solution. A simple way of disguising the taste, devised by a nurse during a prolonged illness, is to add to the saturated solution of the magnesia a good, long drink of cold Vichy, and if taken while still sparkling the patient will not suspect that she is being given a dose.